ply, colony maintenance etc. through departmental workforce, which gets added to the total manpower for computation of output per manshift lowering the overall productivity figure

(v) Power shortage and frequent interuptions in power supply in Eastern region in ECL BCCL and CCL mines.

(c) and (d) As per information received from Coal India Limited, during 1992-93, the number of employees retired on superannuation was *5644* and 6232 employees opted for retirement under Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS). Besides payment of notice pay, gratuity, contributory provident fund and leave encashment as per rules/standing orders the scheme provides for an ex-gratia payment equivalent to one and a half months wages for each completed year of service or monthly wages at the time of retirement multiplied by the balance number of months of seivice left before normal date of retirement, whichever is less.

Shortage of Spare Parts and Machinery in Coal Mines

*193. SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Coal Mines under CIL affected due to shortage of spare parts and machinery during the last three years;

(b) what are the factors behind such shortages;

(c) what steps have been taken by Government to regulate their supplies to ensure smooth work in coal mines; and

(d) the extent to which CIL's modernisation programme is affected by the shortage of spare parts and machinery"

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) By and large coal mines under Coal India Limited have not been affected during the last three years due to shortage of spare parts and machinery as evident from the production performance of Coal India Limited achieved in the recent past. However, occasionally some mines under C1I have faced temporary shortage of equipment and spares due to delayed erection/commissioning or delayed delivery/supply.

(b) Shortage of equipment is generally noticed on account of delayed delivery, erection, commissioning: because of excessive cost of imported spares or for unforeseen break-down, particularly in respect of indigenised spares/assemblies/subassemblies.

(c) Government have constantly reviewed and interacted regarding the supply etc. of critical equipment with the coal companies as well as with the Original Equipment Manufacturers, most of whom are public sector undertakings. Besides, it has, inter-alia, taken the following important decisions:

(1) Stocking of floats/assemblies/subassemblies.

(2) Standardisation of spares.

(3) Computer net-working of Central Stores of CIL and codification of spares.

(4) Evolving uniform maintenance norms.

(5) Emphasising on rehabilitation of equipment rather than fresh purchases.

(d) CIL is going ahead with its modernisation programme without any serious bottlenecks. However, some difficulties have been noticed regarding utilisation of equipment of Russian origin due to non-availability of spares.

National Agency on Prices of Commodities

*194. SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have decided to set up a national agency

on prices to periodically review and calculate the prices of common commodities of daily use on a region-wise basis to protect the interests of the consumers;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof:

(c) if the answer to part (a) above be in the negative, whether. Government propose to set up such an agency in the near future; and

(d) if not, what are the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRIA.K. ANTONY): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) and (d) A Cabinet Committee on Prices (CCP) under the Chairmanship of the Union Finance Minister and Special Action Committee of Secretaries on Monitoring of Prices (SACP) are monitoring the supplies and prices of essential commodities on regular basis. These committees take necessary measures to keep the prices of essential commodities under watch and also to augment their supplies. The Ministry of Civil Supplies, Ctnsumer Affairs and Public Distribution also monitor the prices of 10 essential commodities, namely, rice, wheat, sugar, gram dal, tur dal_ mustard oil, eroundnut oil, Vanaspati, tea and salt on daily and weekly basis.

The Bureau of Industrial Costs and Prices make recommendations on prices in respect of industrial products and consumer durables and the Commission on Agricultural Costs and Prices recommends the prices of agricultural commodities on regular basis. In view of this, there is no need for setting up of another national agency on prices.

Laid off Workers in Sick and Closed Units

*195. SHRI G.G. SWELL:
SHRI CHIMANBHAI MEHTA:

Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) what is the number of idle or laid-off workers in all the sick and closed units in the country; and

(b) what steps Government propose to take to prevent sickness or winding up of sick units so that the labour is saved from the hardship of unemployment?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI P. A. SANGMA): (a) and (b) As per the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 "Lay off" means failure, refusal or inability of an employer on account of shortage of coal or power of raw-materials or the accumulation of stocks or the breakdown of machinery or natural calamity or for any other connected easons to give employment to a workmen whose name is borne on the muster-rolls of his industrial establishment and who has not been retrenched. "Closure" means the permanent closing down of a place of employment or part thereof.

Statements I and II giving the number of units which effected lay off and the number of workers laid off as well as the number of units closed and number of workers affected due to closure during the years 1990 to 1993 are annexed (see below). The number of workers laid off in the sick units is not compiled separately.

Statements I and II giving the number potentially sick industrial units are drawn up by the banks and financial institution concerned on case to case basis in terms of guidelines issued by Reserve Bank of India. Banks and financial institutions periodically review implementation of the rehabilitation packages by the managements of sick industrial units and initiate corrective action where necessary.

The Board of Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR), a quasi-judicial body set-up under the Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provisions) Act, 1985, has been adequately empowered to take necessary preventive, ameliorative, remedial and other measures for revival of sick units.